



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

## A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)

### Lesson 17.1.2 – The Doctrine of Holy Scriptures

#### The New Testament Is God's Word

The apostle Peter clearly taught that the Old Testament writers were moved (carried along) by the Holy Spirit so that what they wrote down in their writings was in truth the Word of God. What about the New Testament, which was written in the Greek language by Jesus' apostles and their companions? Is the New Testament also the Word of God? Is the New Testament also the work of the Holy Spirit speaking through the apostles as He spoke through the Old Testament prophets? Let us look at the record.

Jesus Himself did not write any books. There is only one passage that speaks of Jesus writing anything, and that passage does not tell us what He wrote. When the scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus what should be done to a woman caught in the act of adultery, **“Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger”** (John 8:6). After He responded to their question, **“again He stooped down and wrote on the ground”** (John 8:8).

Nevertheless, we have a written record of what Jesus said, for Jesus said to His apostles: **“He who hears you hears Me”** (Luke 10:16). On the night of His arrest Jesus assured His apostles: **“These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you”** (John 14:25-26). The same Holy Spirit who spoke through the Old Testament prophets would give them Jesus' words and teachings to write down. Jesus said on that same night: **“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you”** (John 16:12-14). The words of truth that the Holy Spirit would give Jesus' apostles would be words not coming from the Holy Spirit alone, but from the Father and the Son as well. In other words, the apostles would be speaking and writing the very Word of God, as given to them by the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Paul claimed that his teaching was the Word of God, for he wrote to the Corinthians: **“We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches”** (1 Corinthians 2:12-13). The very words used by Paul in his teaching and writing were given to him by the Holy Spirit. For this reason he was able to say: **“The things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord”** (1 Corinthians 14:37). Paul did not manufacture the Gospel of Christ out of his own mind. He said: **“I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the (Old Testament) Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the (Old Testament) Scriptures”** (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Paul received his teaching from God, and he passed it on to others exactly as he had received it.

In His prayer to His heavenly Father on the night of His arrest, Jesus referred to the words that God gave to Him, saying: **“I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. ... They have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them”** (John 17:6-8). Jesus' words are the words of God, and these same words from God were given to Jesus' apostles. Again Jesus

prayed to His Father: “**I have given them Your word. ... Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. ... I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word**” (John 17:14-20). Jesus gave the words of God to His apostles. These apostles would speak these words in the world, and people would come to believe in Jesus through these same words. What words did the apostles speak, and what words did the apostles write? Jesus gave them these words, and these words are the words the Father gave to Jesus. They are the words of God.

That is why the apostle Paul told the Ephesians that Christ’s Church was “**built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone**” (Ephesians 2:20). Notice that the apostles are given the same standing as the prophets, since both prophets and apostles were used by God to bring the Word of God into the world. Christ’s believers, His Church, is sustained by the Word of God transmitted to them by God’s prophets and Jesus’ apostles.

In his first letter the apostle Peter says it was the Holy Spirit who worked through Jesus’ apostles as well as through the prophets of old: “**Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven**” (1 Peter 1:10-12). The Old Testament prophets gave true prophecies because the Holy Spirit was in them. So also the apostles who brought the Gospel of Christ to Peter’s readers were impelled by the same Holy Spirit.

By the time Peter wrote his second letter the apostle Paul had probably written most of his New Testament letters. Notice that Peter called these letters of Paul “Scripture” and considered them equal to the Old Testament Scriptures: “**Consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation – as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures**” (2 Peter 3:15-16). Peter regarded the letters of Paul as Scriptures.

The apostle Paul quoted the words of his fellow-worker Luke as Scripture. In his first letter to Timothy Paul wrote: “**For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,’ and, ‘The laborer is worthy of his wages’**” (1 Timothy 5:18). The first passage quoted by Paul is from the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 25:4). But the second quotation is not from the Old Testament Scriptures at all but from the New Testament Gospel of Luke (Luke 10:7). To Paul Scripture includes both Old Testament books and what the Holy Spirit was giving the apostles and their associates in the New Testament. Thus, the New Testament is also Scripture – the very Word of God.

## Questions

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1. What did Jesus Himself write?
2. What promise did Jesus give to His apostles?
3. What did the apostle Paul claim for the words he spoke and wrote?
4. How did Jesus manifest the name of God to His apostles?
5. How would the Holy Spirit use the word taught by Jesus' apostles?
6. What is meant by the foundation of the apostles and prophets?
7. Show that the Holy Spirit was at work in writing both Old and New Testaments.
8. What did Peter think of the letters of Paul?
9. What did Paul think of the Gospel of Luke?
10. Why is the New Testament just as much the Word of God as the Old Testament?